

The Priorities of English for Business in Albania and the Intercultural Communicative Competences.

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Abstract

New developments in the years of democracy in Albania enabled the English out of business in the first plan as the need for businessmen and students studying for business. Albania is rapidly changing with the aim of being part of the process of development and globalization. The higher education in Albania is facing challenges posed by internationalization and cultural diversity. This is clearly reflected in the teaching of foreign languages, especially of teaching English for Special Purposes to economic and business students, which will enable university graduates to work with people that are culturally different. New terms are coined almost every day, due to new realities, or the linguistic needs to express new concepts. This sort of variety enables English to be classified under distinctive purposes such as English for Tourism, English for Medicine and English for Business etc. The reality is that it is not enough to teach or learn English wholly by all means. Thus this sort of division eases both the teacher's achieving the desired course curriculum and learning comprehending the aimed grammatical structures and branch-related vocabulary. For students studying in Business departments, it is planned to have necessary English input to establish written and oral communication in professional life when graduated from university. However, there are problems to be overcome to provide them such objectives before business English instruction initiated. The aim review communicative competence briefly, then discuss what language, English for business as an International Language (EIL) is and argue that communicative competence, especially socio-cultural- economic competence, of EIL speakers is to be different from that of native English speakers.

Keywords: Business English, Cultural diversity, literacy, global, economic terms, global management teaching.

1. Business English Literacy seen as globalizing education

During the last 20 years the need for learning English language is remarkably increased but beside it there is a special need for English for specific purposes. Nowadays in Albania there is a rapid development of the different professional qualification courses. Training ensures participants improving communication skills, professional reading and writing, expanding vocabulary and perceiving specific professional skills in English. Each training is detailed and built specially for the Albanian professionals.

English for business will be defined as ancillary to entrepreneurs and business people in the proficiency of English language skills which they need for their business and in everyday life.

English has been developed into an international language, been taught and learnt everywhere around the world for many years. It has become used widely among non-native speakers because of the rapid development of the global economy and technology and so people wish to establish communication with each other, with other nations which lead increasing spread of English usage. Language is used for various objectives by English speakers, especially for communication among nations, sharing and accessing information, data etc. In this sense, Business English are reconsidered from the points of view of intercultural communication. Considering the great number of language learners with various objectives in their using language and difference among them, determination and consideration of true attitudes in teaching and learning English for Specific Purposes gain vital importance. Thus this leads a more restricted area of language teaching in general concept of English as an International Language, namely English for Specific Purposes, which enables the learner to focus on necessary input which is needed for his/her vocation or job. "As English gathers momentum as the main language of international communication, it is perceived as the language of career opportunity, so the pressure grows for teaching to be more directly employment-related." Moreover, along with the increasing focus on learners' needs, English for Specific Purposes is classified under two categories as English for Academic Purposes and English for Occupational Purposes.

While the Albanian education system lacks the rigor instituted by other national educational frameworks, the field of communication has not been widely cultivated by Albanian scholars. From its roots in the English for business discipline of the school to its own formation as an independent topic of study at Albanian University, communication constructs have fundamental ties and a history that is has started too embedded in Albania and Albanian culture.

The increasing universality and international teaching of the English language sets the stage for the successful development of global partnerships and increased communicative processes. But, because English is the official language of America – what has long been considered the 'leader of the free world' – certain

ideologies about its global incorporation abound. "Should English language teaching/learning be a priority because it gives access to knowledge, to work and to the global market? Or should native languages take the lead for reasons of human dignity?" The essential problem/benefit of global cosmopolitan citizenship education, and by reference, the language it entails, is inherent to this question. To answer it appropriately, we must understand the global effects of applying Western ideological communication curriculum to an increasingly internationally-focused world. An even greater source of testimony regarding international communication is found in post-secondary education as steps are made to invest in the solution of cross-cultural dilemmas.

Recent research has shown that Albanian higher education institutions have begun to create coursework and programs aimed at international business communication, encouraging studies and companies alike to consider their role in global business and how they can be of critical value to the international changes that are taking place.

Some qualification courses are open in Albania to the banking sector, or working in non-banking specialisms, such as HR, IT, or Marketing. It develops a core understanding of key banking functions and principles, global economic terms and introduces the concept of ethical professionalism.

Building on the professional banker syllabus for example the program supports development of technical knowledge and skills and abilities to make professional judgments and informed decisions in relevant work situations.

An issue taken on within Global English Language the curriculum of these programs is the relevance and role of language in the integration of international business. More than understanding simple economics, instructors and business moguls today are stressing the importance of communication skills that can be appropriately applied in international environments as common business practices like mergers, acquisitions and partnerships are entering the global arena. Fantini (2000: 28) describes five constructs that should be developed for successful intercultural communication: awareness, attitudes, skills, knowledge and language proficiency.

The language of a nation or organization is a construct unlike any other as it incorporates multiple cultural elements and lends itself to the ensuing development of other areas of business. 'Global English' has expanded and become "global" in terms of the industries and practices it has a significant impact by taking over, or being overtaken by, the new information technology, which means everything from email and the Internet to mass media advertising, news reporting and all the other forms of political and commercial propaganda.

2. Developing communicative competences in English for business.

English for international communication will be simple, plain, and regular in their linguistic forms and structures, socio- culturally neutral in their interactional strategies. Suggest them to use such English, avoiding two-word verbs and difficult structures in doing business with non-native people, its purpose being to get the speaker's meaning across to the interlocutor. This English would accommodate any varieties as far as they are comprehensible to the educated users of any varieties, native or not. It will contribute to create, maintain, and develop the international standards of English in response to the growing demand for a means of international communication.

That the use of EIL is different from everyday social use of English in communities leads logically on to an argument that communicative competence for EIL is not the same as that for communal use of the language in Anglo-American communities.

First of all, the communicative competence of the EIL users would presuppose two kinds of knowledge-knowledge of the world in general and specialized knowledge in their professional or academic fields that are acquired through education and professional or academic development. They will upgrade EIL users' linguistic, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competencies. EIL users are assumed to have sufficient knowledge of the structure of the language and profession-related vocabulary items; they are expected to have good knowledge of organization of discourse in terms of cohesion and coherence; they should have enough strategic knowledge to enhance communication; and they need to have broad and denominator-like basic commonsense assumptions (universal or pan- human socio-cultural knowledge) to be shared with other people.

These assumptions are acquired through education and experience, but education and experience of individuals are varied and so is the knowledge. What makes it difficult is the fact that these assumptions are heterogeneous, inconsistent, and even contradictory. Nevertheless we need and do communicate internationally as well as intra-nationally.

The use of EIL among professionals and scholars presupposes the users' knowledge of the chosen field of specialization for successful communication. This professional and/or academic knowledge is by nature international and crosses the boundary between native speakers and non-native speakers. These people learn English to use it for specific purposes, not for general purposes nor for mere socialization. While the unfair reality of having native speakers and non-native speakers of English for international communication may be reduced in these global communities of professionals and specialists, it may create the similar distinction of specialists and laymen, thus not helping increase more general intelligibility. However, since the use of EIL

makes the extensive use of writing and writing works toward the standardization of grammar, vocabulary, and orthography, EIL would contribute to increase the shared forms and norms which underlie various English's and norms of their use.

It must be mentioned that 'nearly a quarter of the world's population is already fluent or competent in English, and this figure is steadily growing. When a language reaches the state of a global language, it may follow that its speaker's communicative competence becomes too diversified to conform to that of native speakers. What norms of which society and which culture we should follow will no longer be relevant. Taking in these non-Anglo-American norms of EIL use is a natural adaptation of English use in the process of its internationalization.

3. The challenges of educational institutions in Albania for the implementation of intercultural competence.

The higher education institutions in Albania have to meet this challenge posed by internationalization and cultural diversity by designing and implementing English courses tailored to specific needs. Institutions of higher education in Albania aim at graduating "intercultural competent students" or "global citizens", but this goal is defined broadly without giving additional meaning to these terms. Very few Albanian higher education programs address the development of intercultural competent students as an expected outcome. This lack is due to not well-developed curricula documents and due to the difficulty of identifying the specific components of this concept. No institution has designated methods for documenting or measuring intercultural competences.

A number of Business English education programs are offered in quite different linguistic and social milieus across the World. The gap between the English taught in the classroom and the English used in the workplace became apparent in language instruction. Students in practice - based or interdisciplinary degrees in particular may find that they face literacy demands which span several fields, so that business students, for example, may be expected to confront texts from accountancy, economics, financial management, corporate organization, marketing, statistics, and so on.

The English language has, in many respects, saturated the global market to the point at which a knowledge and understanding of it as a communication skill has become a paramount fixture if people want to accomplish successful global business practices.

In many language teaching professionals Intercultural communicative competence is seen as an extension of communicative competence. We will cite it in Beneke's (2000: 108-109) words "intercultural communication in the wider sense of the word involves the use of significantly different linguistic codes and contact between people holding significantly different sets of values and models of the world. Intercultural competence is to a large extent the ability to cope with one's own cultural background in interaction with others".

The use of the English language has emerged as a social, economic and linguistic dilemma: you're damned if you do and damned if you don't. The expansion of scientific, technical and economic activity on an international scale, has created an increasing demand on learning English because English is the key to technology, commerce and international communication. In order for a professional to successfully communicate in a globalized and culturally different world he must have very good communication skills in English.

4. Teaching English for Business in Albania

The educational programs that implement English as communication are concerned with the formation and application of successful communication practices in the global sphere.

In Albania, the English language is increasingly gaining importance signifying globalization and internationalization of the local culture and linguistic environment. Even though geographically Albania is so close to Italy and Greece and their influence in the economy and bank & monetary system is quite obvious, still the official language in use is English. The specialist of English terms used in business raises the question of: to be or not to be translated, in other words, if translation of economic terms is a "must" in all cases?

The problem that arises is: Do the business graduates have the needed intercultural competences which should be considered as very important for the future professional competences in the certain economical system?

Business English teachers are left without any guidance, and professional development courses when it comes to developing intercultural competence. Mostly it is done by teachers individually.

The idea of an English for business education framework in an Albanian environment is a partnership between business communication faculties. The undergraduate program in Albania is commonly referred to as "English for Business Purposes" which can be seen as acceptance of the use of the English language as a lingua. Global English Language or a neutral linguistic medium for the purpose of business and commerce. Prior to the degree program, provides background information on the secondary education system in place in Albania, in which students begin to formally study English as junior high and high school students. The intensity of this training is reinforced by the fact that English was the compulsory second language for all Universities in Albania.

The cooperation between the universities revealed the Albanian interest in understanding business

applications by way of English reading, writing and oral curriculum. In order to participate in the program, Albanian students were pooled from either the undergraduate professional writing program in the English department or the interdisciplinary international studies program, another factor which indicates the correlation between Albanian communication curriculum and international education curriculum involving the English language. Topics the Albanian students were interested in included “audience analysis for global business communication, uses of technology in multinational workplaces, history of business communication education in the Albania, oral communication norms in various cultures, and instruction writing in business settings,”. From the outside looking in, it is clear that students see the value in learning the skills and application of Albanian English and communication methods.

This kind of linguistic dilemma requires a solution. Even in Albania studies and practice have shown that the use of English for business is more efficient, in an effort to reach international standards and to reduce ethno- linguistic tensions. Indeed, a global embrace of English as the universal language of communication based on business can be used as a method to avoid internal pressure within a business. Activity of a single global language allows for the production and realization of communication and strategies increasingly clear message.

English considered important to economic growth. English for business levels are less developed in Albania. However, that a standard language of communication is essential for doing business. In the case of Albania English remains a dominant presence throughout society, from education to business. Are taking active steps to improve English communication by providing more education in English.

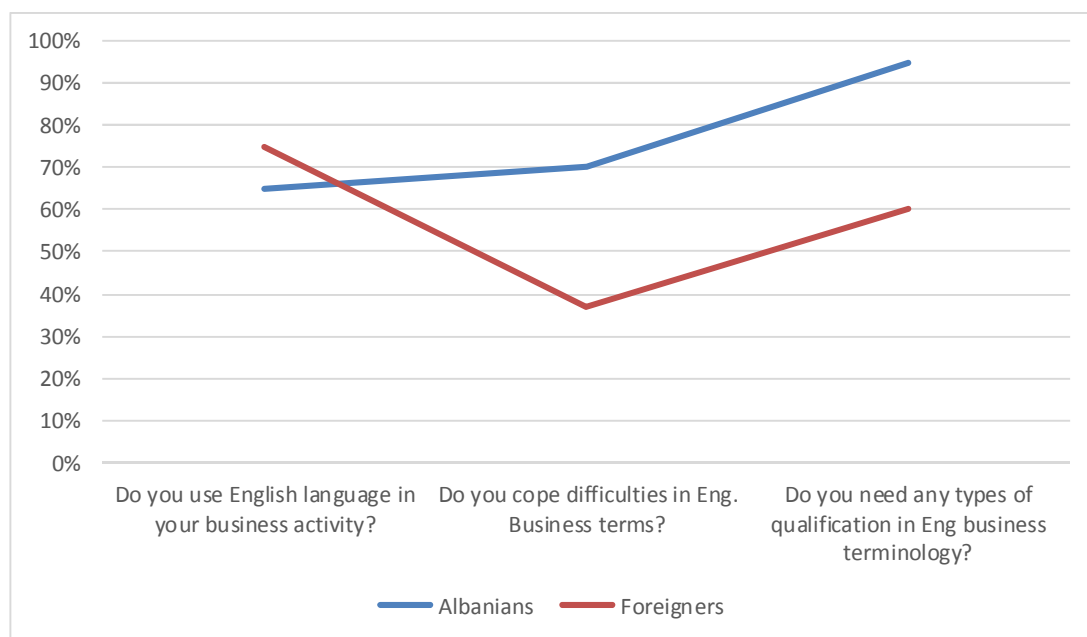
Believe that English will help to increase economic growth, allowing businesses to trade with more countries. The government has been promoting the virtues of doing business, by specifically referring to the growing use of English.

Staff with English language skills had a strong advantage over other employees. Employees with English language skills progress more quickly within the company and that English is beneficial for company growth.

I just interviewed 35 natives and foreigner’s businessmen who run their business activities in Albania for their attitude toward English language and their own preferences for learning the business terminology, There are involved: 14 Albanians, 4 Greece, 8 Italians, 4 Chinese and 5 Turkish. All the results are shown in the table below.

Table 1. Questionnaire of the Albanian and foreign businessmen about their positive attitude toward English for Business.

Types of question	Albanians	Foreigners
Do you use English language in your business activity?	65%	75 %
Do you cope difficulties in Eng. Business terms?	70 %	37%
Do you need any types of qualification in Eng. business terminology?	95 %	60%



Conclusion

Language is a cultural artifact unlike any other in its external simplicity and internal complexity. Anyone who has ever traveled knows that even among the closest geographic areas, vast linguistic differences exist. Effectively communicating in an environment that uses a language outside your own is not equal to flipping through a mini-translation book. What closely follows language constructs are the cultural and social norms that develop on its heels. As distances decrease, variations among attitudes, speech, lifestyle and language appear to increase. To transmit ideas and business practices across time zones and traditions, the concept of a shared language is attractive, and it is here that English comes to the forefront.

Also training in Business English held with groups of different professions according to basic levels, intermediate or advanced English proficiency must be given the priority. They allow rapid advancement in communication skills and the integration in today's business world. They aim to: Improve technical writing skills. Running conferences or meetings in English. Broad Vocabulary protocol to business meetings.

In conclusion there are some recommendations for Albanian system education.

- The intercultural and communicative competencies in the Business English Curriculum is a principal that should be applied.
- Improvement of the teaching of Business English in order to develop the intercultural and communicative competences in parallel with linguistic skills is a "must" nowadays.
- The professional training of the lecturers in understanding and developing intercultural competencies should be promoted.

Teachers are now struggling to be much more thoughtful to the needs. In that sense, the ESP approach is playing its own part in the development of communicative language teaching.

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